

Message Text

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PAGE 01 DAMASC 02726 181825Z

45

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EA-06 ISO-00 SAJ-01 SAM-01 SAB-01 SSO-00

NSCE-00 INRE-00 CIAE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-05 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 EUR-12

NEAE-00 OMB-01 ACDA-05 MC-01 EB-04 IO-10 /089 W

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FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1996

AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY JIDDA IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY TOKYO IMMEDIATE

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM IMMEDIATE

USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE 119

DIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE

SECDEF WASHDC IMMEDIATE

USIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GERMANY IMMEDIATE

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TOKYO FOR SECRETARY'S PARTY

USCINCEUR FOR ECJ 2-O

USIA FOR INA

EO 11652: N/A

TAGS: PROP, SOPN, SY

SUBJECT: SYRIAN PRESS TREATMENT OF WAR TALK

1. SUMMARY: MEDIA HAS GIVEN INCREASED COVERAGE OVER WEEKEND
TO "ISRAELI WAR THREATS" AND SARG ACTIONS. PRESS AND RADIO

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REPORTED FOREIGN MINISTER KHADDAM BRIEFED HEADS OF ARAB DIPLO-

MATIC MISSIONS NOVEMBER 16 ON SITUATION.

EDITORIAL IN GOVERNMENT-RUN DAILY ELABORATES ON FOREIGN MINISTER'S REMARKS AND ASCRIBES ISRAELI MOTIVES TO DOMESTIC PROBLEMS, AND GOI'S REACTION TO ITS ISOLATED POSITION IN WORLD, AND ITS FEAR OF POTENTIAL CHANGES IN "THE POSITION OF ITS SOLE ALLY." NEWSPAPERS NOVEMBER 18 CONTINUE FRONTPAGE WIRE SERVICE REPORTS OF ISRAELI WAR PREPARATIONS AND "NEWS" US HAS AGREED TO SUPPLY ISRAEL WITH LARGE QUANTITIES OF VARIOUS ARMS, INCLUDING NEW MODERN AIRCRAFT, ROCKETS, AND ANTI-TANK WEAPONS. NEWSPAPER ALSO REPORTED SCHEDULED VISIT NOVEMBER 20-25 OF SEVEN SOVIET WARSHIPS TO LATAKIA. TONE OF PRESS AND RADIO BASICALLY RESTRAINED. END SUMMARY.

2. NOVEMBER 17 EDITORIAL IN AL-THAWRA, GOVERNMENT-RUN DAILY, EXPRESSES ASTONISHMENT THAT ISRAEL, AFTER EVENTS OF PAST YEAR, HAS FAILED LEARN THAT RESORT TO CONTINUED AGGRESSION AND EXPANSION IS DOOMED TO FAILURE. IT DESCRIBES ISRAEL AS MOTIVATED BY REVENGE COMPLEX, ITS ISOLATION IN WORLD, ITS FEARS OF POLICY CHANGES BY ITS "SOLE ALLY" AND ITS DOMESTIC PROBLEMS. EDITORIAL ADDS THAT ISRAEL BEGAN RECENT CAMPAIGN TO HEIGHTEN TENSION IN AREA AND ESPECIALLY TO FRIGHTEN SYRIA INTO CHANGING ITS PRINCIPLED POSITIONS. IN ADDITION, ISRAEL IS TRYING TO PREVENT PROGRESS OF POLITICAL MOVES FOR PEACE AND TO "GOAD" SYRIA INTO RENEWING UNDOF "FOR NOTHING IN RETURN." EDITORIAL CONCLUDES THAT DESPITE SYRIA'S CONCERN TO GIVE PEACE EVERY POSSIBLE CHANCE, IT IS PREPARED TO RESIST ANY AGGRESSION.

3. AL-BAATH ON NOVEMBER 17 SAID THAT UN MILITARY OBSERVERS DESCRIBE ME SITUATION AS DETERIORATING. ARTICLE REPORTS THAT SECRETARY KISSINGER ANNOUNCED US IS URGENTLY STUDYING REPORTS ON MILITARY MOBILIZATION IN ME, AND QUOTES HIM AS SAYING HE DOES NOT BELIEVE ANY STATE IN AREA WILL RESORT TO MILITARY ACTION AT THIS STAGE. US ALSO REPORTEDLY INFORMED SOVIET UNION OF NEWS OF IMMINENT WAR. ARTILCE ADDED THE US SAID IT WOULD CONTINUE USING ITS INFLUENCE FOR SAKE OF PEACE. ARTICLES THEN QUOTE NUMEROUS AMERICAN NEWSPAPERS, INCLUDING CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR, THAT US CONTINUES SENDING OFFENSIVE ARMS TO ISRAEL IN SPITE OF TENSE SITUATION.

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PAGE 03 DAMASC 02726 181825Z

4. AL-BAATH, NOVEMBER 18, HEADLINES FRONTPAGE ARTICLE "UNUSUAL MOVEMENTS BY THE ENEMY." THRUST OF STORY IS THAT OBSERVERS THROUGHOUT WORLD SEE CURRENT TENSION IN AREA AS RESULT OF ISRAELI DESIRE TO INITIATE HOSTILITIES. ARTICLE REPORTS ISRAELI FORCES ARE ON ALERT AND THAT RESERVES HAVE BEEN CALLED UP AND CONCENTRATED ON GOLAN. ARTICLE THEN QUOTES NEWS "FROM WASHINGTON" THAT US HAS AGREED TO SUPPLY ISRAEL WITH

LARGE QUANTITIES OF VARIOUS ARMS INCLUDING AIRCRAFT, ROCKETS, AND ANTI-TANK WEAPONS. "AVIATION WEEK" QUOTED AS SAYING US ARMS SHIPMENTS TO ISRAEL INCREASING AND THAT ISRAEL WILL GET NEW PLANE ONLY NOW BEING TESTED FOR US AIR FORCE. ARTICLE QUOTES UNNAMED OBSERVERS AS STATING ARABS HAVE SUFFICIENT MEANS TO REALIZE DECISIVE VICTORY. AL-BAATH QUOTES STATEMENT PRESIDENT FORD MADE TO "US NEWS AND WORLD REPORT" TO EFFECT THAT CRITICAL CONDITIONS EXISTING IN ME CANNOT GO ON INDEFINITELY WITHOUT TAKING INTO CONSIDERATION THE LEGITIMATE RIGHTS OF PALESTINIAN PEOPLE.

6. COMMENT: THRUST OF PRESS COVERAGE IS TO BALME GOI FOR INCREASED TENSION IN AREA. IT SEEKS TO DEPICT A TORN AND FRUSTRATED ISRAEL ABOUT TO STRIKE OUT IN DESPERATION. SYRIAN MILITARY DESCRIBED AS BASICALLY PREPARED FOR DEFENSE OF COUNTRY IN REACTION TO POTENTIAL ISRAELI AGGRESSION. WITH EXCEPTION SINGLE QUOTE PARA 5 ABOVE THAT ARABS ABLE BEAT ISRAELIS, COVERAGE IN SYRIAN PRESS AND RADIO IS THUS FAR RESTRAINED IN RHETORIC.
MURPHY

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